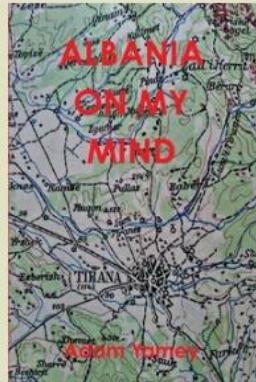


BY ADAM YAMEY



MAL BERISHA'S FAREWELL PARTY
30th October 2015, at Regents University,
London

Albania on my Mind



A satisfied reader wrote about this book as follows:

"I enjoyed your book very much. I couldn't put your book down. Your writing style is , concise and very focused. your narrative brought back many memories. Although the events were unfortunate in Albania your descriptions brought a smile in my face. I have lived through that regime and I can relate to all the stories in your book. I am recommending this book to my husband and my children. You should go back experience the new Albania."



It was thanks to an email from Lixhan John Lumani, an Albanian barber in Connecticut (USA), that I first came into contact with Ambassador Mal Berisha. The barber informed me that an Albanian film was to be shown at Rich Mix in London's Shoreditch district. My wife and I booked tickets for the event, and when I saw that the Albanian Embassy was involved in the screening, I decided to bring a copy of my book *Albania on My Mind*—just in case the ambassador would be attending.

As it turned out, he was there. During the interval, I asked him if he would be interested in receiving a copy of my book. He was—and kindly insisted that I sign it. In addition, he invited my wife and me to a book launch that was being held at the Albanian Embassy two weeks later.



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We attended the book launch of Elizabeth Gowing's book about Edith Durham and were welcomed by a friendly group of people, mostly members of the AAA. Soon after, we joined the AAA and became regular attendees at the meetings held at the Albanian Embassy. It was during these gatherings that we became increasingly friendly with Mal and Donika Berisha. Had it not been for Mal's invitation to the book launch, I doubt I would ever have become involved with the AAA. I remain grateful to him for that—as well as for his warm hospitality and the fascinating people I have met as a result.



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It was with great sadness that we learned Mal would be leaving London at the end of October. My wife and I had lumps in our throats as we attended the wonderful farewell party held in his honour at Regent's University on the day before Halloween. At least 200 people, including several members of the AAA, attended this multimedia event.

A short film was shown, highlighting memorable moments from Mal's time in London. Mal also launched his new book (in Albanian), which explores the numerous connections—cultural, diplomatic, and otherwise—between his native land and the UK. He answered questions posed by both a panel of eminent guests and members of the audience.

Three Albanian artists performed music and recited poetry during the event. Many people gave touching speeches in both Albanian and English, rightly singing Mal's praises. Mal expressed his deep affection for the UK and emphasised his belief that the AAA is playing a vital role in promoting interest in his country.



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One thing that Mal said, which struck me as particularly apt, was that he wanted his embassy to feel like a welcoming, happy family home—one to which people would want to return again and again. He achieved exactly that, as all of us at the AAA can testify.

I am certain that we will all miss Mal and Donika very much, and we wish them nothing but the very best for the future.

Finally, we live near Bayswater, just a short walk from the bust of Skanderbeg that was erected at Mal's instigation. I'm grateful that something so close to our home now serves as

a lasting reminder of Mal and Donika, even if they will be living far away.

Ju faleminderit, lamtumire, dhe fat të mirë për të ardhmen!

Visit <http://www.adamyamey.com>





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